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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Reconnaissance Office

SUBJECT: Request for Funding to Support the Ninety-Day OXCART Program Extension

1. I am submitting herewith a revised OXCART Budget which is based on the ExCom decision to extend the program for ninety days. These figures represent a careful review of each line item rather than application of an average cost per month for elements of the project. In summary, we have concluded that to extend the deployment at Kadena and meet mission objectives would cost an additional [redacted] This would increase our present FY 1968 allocation to [redacted] which is well within the [redacted] 25X1 ceiling for OXCART approved in the Presidential and Congressional budgets. These figures are somewhat below the estimates previously submitted for six-month and one-year options. This is a result of the changed situation and the fact that we now have more operating experience upon which to base our estimates.

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2. In compiling the revised estimates we have assumed that certain facts are inherent in the ExCom decision:

a. The asset must be preserved not only for the present but for the period after 31 March 1968 in accordance with existing phase-out directions.

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b. At no time will flying safety be compromised by cannibalization, by lack of spares or components, by lack of pilot proficiency, or by curtailment of maintenance. Spares procurement should be limited to that which will insure safety of aircraft and crews, and provide for ultimate storage in accordance with existing guidelines.

c. Six operational aircraft, one test aircraft, and one dual-seat trainer will continue to be flown at the present average rate of flying hours per month through 31 March 1968.

d. There will be sufficient spares for the airframe, engine, and associated equipments so that the program will have a future capability of reactivating five operational aircraft and flying them for ninety days without an outside source of supply.

3. We have been verbally requested to submit estimates of savings to be realized if the trainer, the test aircraft, and one operational aircraft were to be grounded and stored early. Although we do not concur in this approach from the standpoint of mission responsibilities, we have included comparative costs in the attached schedule. The savings 25X1 of [redacted] which could be realized in this manner is relatively small in terms of the overall community interest and completely disproportionate to the benefits which can be realized through the retention of these aircraft for the additional two months.

4. The following comments concerning specific line items are submitted as an aid in evaluating the estimates:

a. It is essential that the EG&G range be kept in operation to enable us to test equipment modifications which are designed to counter the increasingly difficult environment in North Vietnam. This has been discussed in detail in an earlier memorandum. 25X1 [redacted] dated 12 October 1967.)

b. The dual-seat trainer, which is equipped with J-75 engines, is by far the most economical means of affording basic flying training to the air crews. In addition to air refueling practice, instrument training, and landing practice, it provides the only means for true crew standardization and for actual assessment of crew proficiency. The saving accomplished by placing the trainer in storage in January ([redacted] is insignificant in relation to the benefits to be derived from keeping it in operation through March. 25X1

c. Although the majority of the research and development phase of the OXCART Program has been completed and the OXCART vehicle is now fully operational, it is necessary to have the testing vehicle (Aircraft 121) available and operating to test performance improvements and to resolve problems raised during actual operations. Examples are:

(1) Increase in range of the operational aircraft first tested and proven with the test aircraft at [redacted] 25X1

(2) Development of Tropical Day transonic transition technique, the necessity for which was demonstrated by operations from Kadena Air Base. This technique was developed and the testing was completed by the test force utilizing Aircraft 121.

(3) One way to counter the increased defensive activity of the North Vietnamese is to raise the operational mission altitude. The test aircraft will be utilized to explore revised Mach 3.1 and Mach 3.2 profiles with begin-cruise altitudes higher than those presently being used. After this testing, the profiles will be further checked by the detachment for operational aircraft compatibility.

(4) The testing of engine components and aircraft systems as well as the resolving of unforeseen malfunctions and deficiencies essential to the safety of the vehicle during operational missions, will be continued. 25X1

d. A minimum of three operational aircraft must 25X1 be maintained at [redacted] for combat crew training, essential weapon system testing, and as alert aircraft for additional operational requirements. Although basic flying training, crew standardization and proficiency evaluation can be accomplished with the training aircraft, it is also mandatory to keep each pilot at peak proficiency in the complete operational weapon system. This includes mission profile flights and camera and [redacted] 25X1 25X1 [redacted] operation in simulated overflight environments. Air crews are regularly rotated from Kadena to allow for this added proficiency training. While performance improvements, problem fixes, engine tests, etc., are initially explored in the test aircraft, the reliability and repeatability of integrated weapon system performance must be confirmed in the operational aircraft. The A-12 fleet has already been reduced to the minimum size possible for operations which are vital to national security.

5. The ExCom decision implied that the OXCART Project would retain the capability to redeploy the A-12 to Kadena during the period between the 15 February departure and 31 March 1968, if this should become necessary. This is compatible with existing policy directives that the A-12 aircraft be stored with spares to insure a capability for renovation of five aircraft for a short period without an outside source of supply. These requirements have been interpreted as normal depot base supply and Fly Away Kit (FAK) spares, plus the utilization of the ninety-day stored items. Costs have been estimated on that basis. If a redeployment to Kadena should actually occur in March, 1968, however, additional spares would be required to sustain operations.